

FROM CORINTH TO EPHESUS

Excavations in Corinth have been extensive. Across the isthmus, an ancient roadway about 3 ½ miles long was uncovered called the *diolkos*. Grooves about 5' apart served as tracks for wooden platforms on wheels that transported cargo from the Saronic Gulf to the Gulf of Corinth, thus eliminating the long sea voyage around the Peloponnesus.

Like Athens, Corinth was home to many shrines and temples. Statues of Athena and Apollo along with several temples and sacred precincts have been excavated. These include a temple to Tyche, goddess of good fortune, a temple to Hera, wife of Zeus, another temple dedicated to the whole pantheon of Greco-Roman deities, a fountain shrine dedicated to

Poseidon, the god in whose honor the Isthmian games were held, and a shrine to Aphrodite, goddess of love and fertility. Aphrodite also had a temple on the Acrocorinth, the rugged hill rising some 1500' above the city. Temples to Demeter and Kore also have been excavated on the Acrocorinth. The city featured the *Asclepion*, a medical complex dedicated to Asclepius, the god of healing, and



This temple of Apollo at Corinth was situated on a hill directly overlooking the city forum. It was a constant reminder of Corinth's pagan roots.



The Diolkos in Corinth, a paved slogging road across the isthmus, linked the eastern and western harbors between the Saronic Gulf (Aegean Sea) and the Gulf of Corinth (Adriatic Sea). It provided a means of transporting cargo east and west without sailing around the Peloponnesus.

it had quarters for bathing, dining, exercise and sleeping. (The god's instructions for cures were believed to come in dreams.) Many terra-cotta models of body parts were excavated here, symbols of cures.

In addition to the religious shrines, Corinth had extensive commercial structures. These included a Roman forum, a theater, a market, public baths, two matching basilicas, extensive shops along the Lechaion Road, a gymnasium, a *bema* (judgment seat) and many



This is the Corinthian bema (= platform) on which Roman officials stood when making public appearances. Paul would have stood on the lower level, Gallio at the top.

other civic buildings. Paul was himself arraigned before this very *bema* during the proconsulship of Gallio (Ac. 18:12ff.). Gallio's office, in turn, has been verified by an inscription from Delphi that put his tenure in the 26th acclamation year of Claudius as *imperator*, a date that can be cross-referenced with other Roman sources.

Two excavated artifacts, even though possibly from a bit later in time than Paul's visit, testify to the Jewish community in Corinth, a stone lintel with the inscription "Synagogue of the Hebrews," and a marble arch post decorated with

menorahs. Also discovered was a remarkable independent verification of Erastus, the city's Director of Public Works, who was one of Paul's converts, an inscription in a pavement between the market

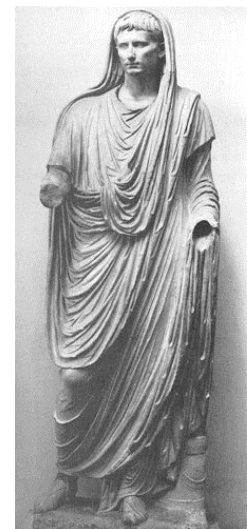


This inscribed paving block next to the theater indicates that Erasmus, at his own expense, laid this pavement. This same Erasmus, the Commissioner of Public Works, is mentioned twice in the New Testament.

and the theater. Originally bronze letters filled the depressions in the pavement, and although the bronze is no longer there, the depressed letters can be clearly read: "Erastus in return for his aedileship¹ laid [the pavement] at his own expense" (Rom. 16:23; Ac. 19:22).

Other recoveries, in addition to providing general background concerning Corinth, may

help us understand some of Paul's comments in his Corinthian correspondence. For instance, Paul's comments about head coverings and prayer are illuminated by the statuary of Corinth. Roman men covered their heads with their togas in pagan prayer; Paul instructs Christian men not to follow suit (1 Cor. 11:4, 7). Wives in Corinth traditionally covered their heads as a sign of marriage (more or less comparable to wearing a wedding ring), but married women sometimes threw off this traditional covering in order to express their "liberated" status. Paul instructs Christian women to wear a veil or head covering (1 Cor. 11:5-6, 13).



Caesar Augustus in a devotional posture with his toga pulled up over his head

¹ An aedile was a magistrate in charge of streets, markets, games, and public buildings.

The inscriptions in honor of Tiberius Claudius Dinippus, the citizen in charge of the grain supply for famine relief, demonstrates how severe was the food shortage in the city. It may well be that this food shortage is what Paul refers to as “the present crisis” (1 Co. 7:26). Paul’s title for Phoebe as a patroness of the Cenchreaean² church (Ro. 16:2) is reflected in a Corinthian inscription honoring Iunia Theodora as a federal and civic patroness, a woman who served the citizens of the city, just as Phoebe served the Christians in her church.

Ephesus



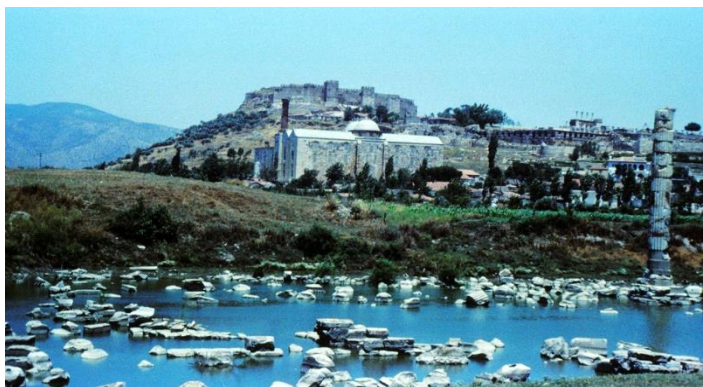
This view, from above the theater, looks toward the natural harbor, one of the reasons Ephesus was so commercially successful. Here, a mob of frenzied Ephesians protested Paul’s ministry (Ac. 19:23-41).

On his third missions tour, Paul spent considerable time in Ephesus, a port city of the Roman Province of Asia that lay upstream from where the Cayster River entered the Aegean Sea. In the time of Paul, it was the chief commercial center for western Asia Minor, and in addition to its sea access, it lay at the intersection of two major overland routes, the coastal road running north toward Smyrna and Pergamum and the interior route to Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea. Like other Greco-Roman cities, Ephesus featured an agora, various temples (of which the most important was the shrine to Artemis, the patron deity of the city), public baths and latrines, fountains, a gymnasium, a library, a stadium, and a theater. The main street, the Arkadiane, was a marble

thoroughfare running from the theater to the harbor and flanked by colonnades.

In addition to the more sophisticated features of the city, Ephesus also boasted an arena for gladiatorial contests and animal baiting. Perhaps Paul alludes to this when he says he “fought with beasts at Ephesus” (cf. 1 Co. 15:32), though as a Roman citizen, his language was metaphorical only. (Citizens, even if convicted of crimes, were exempt from animal baiting.)

Paul’s use of the lecture hall of Tyrannus



Only one column (right) stands today from the swamp-covered foundations of the Temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

² Cenchreae was the Corinthian seaport on the Saronic Gulf and about 7 miles to the east.



The broad, marble-paved streets with columns continue to witness to the wealth and sophistication of Ephesus in Paul's day. The stele in the foreground is a relief sculpture of Hermes, the Greek god of whom some citizens in Lystra thought Paul was an incarnation.

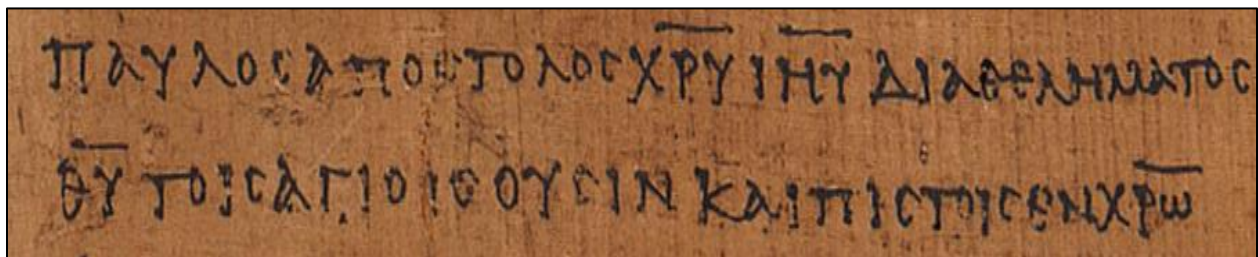
in Ephesus might have been possible because of his connections to people in positions of influence (Ac. 19:10). That Paul had friends among some of the wealthy and privileged is demonstrated by Luke's use of the term *Asiarchs* (ἀσιαρχῶν) in describing people of position who warned Paul not to enter the theater during the Artemis riot (Ac. 19:31). Inscriptions indicate that *Asiarchs* were the foremost men of the province, chosen from among the wealthy and aristocrats. Of course, Paul's time in Ephesus came to an abrupt halt when the supporters of the goddess Artemis rioted (Ac. 19:23ff.), and he was compelled to leave abruptly after narrowly escaping a lynching (Ac. 20:1).

Later, when Paul was imprisoned (probably either in Caesarea or Rome), he wrote several "prison" letters, one of which is the New Testament Book of Ephesians. While the title "To the Ephesians" is found in New Testament Greek manuscripts from the 5th century and later, this seems to have been a somewhat late conclusion, since the earliest manuscripts



This statue of Artemis (Diana) once stood in the Ephesian temple during Paul's time there.

do not have an addressee at all in the Greek text. These early manuscripts include the very earliest papyrus copy (p46) as well as the two most important 4th century vellum texts, Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. In turn, this has led scholars to suggest that perhaps the letter was written to more than one congregation, possibly all of them in Asia, but only one of which may have been Ephesus. It also may help explain why this letter has no list of mutual acquaintances, which is common in his other letters. Here, the only name in the letter other than Paul's is that of Tychicus, his courier (6:21).



"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through [the] will of God to the holy ones who are also faithful in Christ." (Eph. 1:1). p46 University of Michigan, Hatcher Library